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ABSTRACT

Portfolio evaluation process promotes thinking while it minimizes multiple-choice mentality. Some educators find that reviewing with the students what they learned, with consideration for the structure of knowledge, provides self-confidence for the pupils' next try. They need self-confidence to critique each other's work, before the teacher evaluates it again. Ranking is not productive, because it does not allow the student to learn self-evaluation based on the discipline's structural criteria. Self-evaluation is the greatest of educational skills to promote lifetime learning to find solutions to all kinds of challenges, academic, technological, and mundane. Many psychologists are so involved in the individual's mental and emotional characteristics that they neglect to inquire how the group to which the child belongs (in this case the classroom) affects that student's perceptions and behavior. No one need be a total failure with the consequent dropping out of school and society, resulting in either apathy or destructive behavior. In the author's opinion, most participants object to taking normative tests, and the teachers who live with them suffer unhappiness many a school day. A change using process portfolios with self-evaluation to set goals will benefit teachers, students, administrators, and eventually the community with fewer societal dropouts on welfare. (Contains 30 references.) (Author)

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Grades Versus Portfolios

by

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Scope

This paper presents a discussion that compares the use of grades and portfolios in evaluating students.

First, the Analytical Exposition defines grading, both test and report card grades, followed by a definition of portfolio evaluation.

Second, the Critical Context compares normative grades and portfolio evaluation as vehicles of motivation and direction for teachers and students to develop educational objectives: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor (Bloom. 1981, 7-8) (Krathwohl et al. 1964, 6-7).

Third, The Integrative Conclusion will summarize the conclusions and delineate how my understanding of the systems of grades and portfolio enhances my personal and professional effectiveness

1. ANALYTICAL EXPOSITION

DEFINITIONS

Classroom Test Grades

The most frequent classroom grade is the test grade. The most common grading system in our schools is a translation of the test score into a normative letter grade (Evans 1976, 30)..

The normal curve is a mathematical device used to compare the score of each child to all the children who take the same test. It gives the teacher a total number

right; which then is transposed into a letter grade (Kurian 1988, 1364).

Usually all the scores are listed from the highest to the lowest. Then the distribution of scores is divided into quartiles. The teacher assigns a letter grade to each score. The A's and B's comprise the top quartile (the first 25%). The C's are in the second and third quartiles. The fourth quartile holds the D's, and F's. Percentile rank is a concept easily understood by the student, teacher, parents, and the public (Ebel 1969, 12).

Report Card Grades

The report card grade is different from the test grade in two ways; first that it goes home to parents and secondly in its definition. The Journal of Research and Development defines report card grades as:

A grade is a symbol (letter, number, word, etc.) which represents a value judgment concerning the relative quality of a student's achievement of course objectives during a specified period of instruction (Terwilliger 1977, 22).

The concepts of 'value ' and 'relative quality' denote not only cognitive objectives, but also the affective, and psychomotor objectives. This additional criteria asks the teacher to include personal judgment of the child's effort and attitude. Sometimes conforming behavior becomes a

substantial part of the mark. As a result, the report card grade is more difficult to explain to the student and to the parent.

Evaluation

Ruth Mitchell declares, " Evaluation sends a message. It points to what is valued and ignores what is not perceived to be important (1992, vii)." That definition points to the process inherent in the educational portfolio, not to the student ranking, that normative tests produce.

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory definition of portfolio (Arter 1990, 1) is expanded by the Paulsons:

A portfolio is a purposeful, interrelated collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas. The collection includes student participation in selecting contents, criteria for judging merit, evidence of student self-reflection. The portfolio communicates what is learned and why it is important (1991, 2).

To clarify the definition for themselves, the staff of Glen Oak School developed the following guide explaining the "Purposes and Functions of Evaluation:"

[The format has been revised to avoid repetitive phrases].

Evaluation should:

- Provide students with a wide range of information that include the affective, cognitive, and psychomotor domains.
- Help the students and teachers to develop skill in self- appraisal, self-understanding, and self- acceptance.
- Assist the teacher in developing insights about the student.
- Be an on-going process that points the way to stimulate further growth.
- Serve as a motivating force.
- Make available a written record of the evaluation to parents, academic institutions, and other agencies.
- Provide a basis for program planning and design (Dowling 1976, 89-92).

II THE CRITICAL CONTEXT

The external frame of reference applied to evaluate grading the student portfolio is philosophical, namely behaviorism, humanism, and pragmatism.

Behaviorism

A structured curriculum with specific objectives of competence follow the ideas of B. F. Skinner (Goldenson. 1970, 1014-16). The boxes of graduated skills plus computer programs develop what Benjamin S. Bloom named "mastery learning" (1981, 126-27).

Every student's aim is to eventually master the required knowledge. Evaluation relates specifically to each skill according to criteria devised by the teacher and student. All cognitive comments are in reference to the graduated criterion, therefore grades are not required. (Terwilliger 1977, 24).

Investigation of the competencies related to both motivational and performance variables in classroom achievement were investigated by Covington. He reports the following behavioral results:

Under the mastery format, positive perceptions of ability were maintained even in the case of failure as long as students eventually reached their grade goals or showed some improvement however small.. Isolated failures, although temporarily demoralizing, played little part in determining overall motivational reaction (Dec. 1984, 1048).

Pragmatism

The pragmatists welcome the identification of pupil differences and abilities. Grades are means of communicating and comparing these differences to the norm. They consider it advisable for students to realize what choices are available because of the scores made on tests. The norm-referenced idea of grades is used for making decisions such as grade placement, choice of

electives, college selection, vocation, etc. (Terwilliger 1977, 23-26)

Covington reports the results of pragmatic methods:

By contrast, the competitive paradigm provided no opportunity for students to make good their failures. This led to greater student demoralization. Even though failures were fewer under the competitive system (1984, 1048).

Humanism

Students are not compared to each other. The classroom is more informal with small groups, individual study, and partner learning. The emphasis is on principles, understanding the structure of each subject, asking relevant questions, the research process to find the answers, problem solving, and presentation of hypotheses rather than fact memorization. Learning with partners.

The Humanist reasons that multitudes of facts are never used outside the classroom. Whereas, principles and the organizational structure of a discipline will serve the pupil for a lifetime of learning.

Before a written summary is given to parents, students are involved in self-evaluative conversations with the teacher. No one is labeled a failure. Stating future goals on past achievement gives the student the motivation to try.

All members of the class are partners in learning activities. Children are not afraid of their teacher. Nor are they reticent to ask questions for fear that their teacher will think them stupid. No A, B, C, D, or F symbol is used (Terwilliger 1977, 24-25).

The humanist educator agrees with William Glasser that grades do not motivate students to learn. As it is, those who have a mark of C or lower, believe they are not capable of learning. In the "average" high school, "over 50%" stop trying because of grading. The type of schooling, including student Participative teaching techniques with "(relevance and thinking)" does more for optimal learning than any grade. Instead of marks, knowing what they learned and what they need to learn encourage pupil effort (1969, 95).

Many educators still believe that, if cognitive objectives are learned, then simultaneously the affective behaviors are also learned. Research questions this concept. The growth of affective behaviors require activities and curriculum suitable to the development of relevant student participation with the same consideration as cognitive behaviors. (Krathwal et al. 1964, 20).

ABOUT GRADES

Reality is that students, ages five to eighteen, spend more time in the classroom than any other place. Teachers too, live a great part of their lives in the school

classroom. Can these hours together be pleasant, as well as productive for all who participate?

Instead of a competitive climate, a caring, trusting, student-teacher partnership and student-peer partnering diminish stress and frustration. Many classrooms start each semester with such a relationship, but it is disrupted for all students who receive C's or lower, when the teacher grades.

The statistics on dropout students indicate that Kronich and Hargis are correct when they advise, "Drop out prevention should be viewed as a linear process spanning kindergarten through twelfth grade (1990, 139)."

The grading system uses tests and grades to label children because of a continuous search for the homogeneous group: Gifted, Creative, Average, Borderline, Learning Disabled, .Developmentally Handicapped, Emotionally Unstable, and on and on. . . Many of these labeled groups are subsidized by government funds.

This kind of grading is promoting in the student a self-image that separates and alienates him from his peers, the teachers, and from learning. As long as the power of evaluation and grading is the teacher's and does not involve self-evaluation by the student, the greatest of learning motivators is ignored.

"Books on individualized instruction have questioned grading practices on the grounds that they stifle the development of a truly individualized learning approach. . .

...Papers, such as that given by Leuba(1974), also argue that letter grades and individualized instruction are incompatible (Evans 1976, 33)."

ABOUT PORTFOLIOS

The student's work portfolio involves student and teacher to confer while learning. Pupils evaluate their progress and with their teachers, verbalize, or write their goals for their next project. Humanistic values are evident

Children too young to have writing skills, verbalize their achievement each day with hope for continued learning. Hope is what the student and teacher can exchange at each conference. Hope that the teacher and student will be successful. If a student thinks a goal is attainable and important, more effort is invested, which leads to more thought about it, and a focusing of behavior to attain it. Continued instructive hope at each conference will escalate the feeling of success for the teacher and the student, resulting in a more satisfying self image for both (Stotland 1969, 17).

Involvement in goal setting and structuring the objectives is a great method of empowering students. They will not be answering text book questions. They will research for answers to their questions preferably using trade books, encyclopedias, the library, magazines, interviews, debates, role playing, etc., lifetime skills to

answer pupil and teacher questions. Few people, once out of school, use a textbook. Textbooks ask other people's questions.

Classroom methods are recognized as of optimal importance by critics, even by those who place great emphasis on social, and economic disparities. Kozal states in Savage Inequalities, "The rationale behind much of this writing is that the pedagogic problem in our cities are not chiefly matters of injustice, inequality, or segregation, but of insufficient information about teaching strategies (1990, 51).

One basic concept of schooling suggested by Bloom is that the dialectic approach, the process of self-development through logical use of thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis appears to be more effective in producing higher mental processes, rather than the didactic method which promotes the inclination to moralize, to lecture to others, and to preach (1981, 60).

Portfolio evaluation process promotes thinking while it minimizes multiple-choice mentality. Some educators find that reviewing with the students what they learned, with consideration for the structure of the knowledge, provides self-confidence for the pupils' next try. They need specific criteria to discuss each other's work, before the teacher evaluates it.

Ranking does not work because it does not allow the student to learn self-evaluation based on the discipline's

structural criteria. Self-evaluation is the greatest of educational skills to promote lifetime learning to find solutions to all kinds of challenges, academic, technological and mundane (Wasserman 1991, 96) (Bruner 1966, 96).

At this point a comparison of the definitions of grades and portfolios, clarifies their incompatibility. No grade can effectively communicate all of the concepts necessary for the pupil and teacher to promote effective learning (Tierney et al, 1991, 26).

They cite this example of pupil thinking. . . . "Two fifth grade students asked their teacher, "Why are we doing all this discussion and writing. If this is not what is on the tests (1991, 26)?"

No one in our schools need be a total failure with the consequent dropping out of school and society, resulting in either apathy or destructive behavior. In-school extra-curricular clubs, involving student interests should begin in kindergarten and follow through twelfth grade. They offer exploratory learning activities without the pressures of the classroom. Such programs will develop a positive self-concept and identity. School success becomes the personal success of everyone: students, teachers, parents, and administrators (Kronich 1990, 135-39).

Farber, author of *Crisis in Education* aptly describes teachers as having "stress, burnout, depression, demoralization, disillusionment, and alienation" (1991, 4).

These same words aptly describe what is suffered by all the children who are labeled low achievers, failures, and dropouts

In my opinion, most participants subjected to taking normative tests and the teachers who live with them suffer unhappiness many a school day. A change to a more humanized concept of education using portfolio evaluation process without grades will benefit teachers, students, parents, administrators, and eventually the community.

Evidently, educators agree with Farber's statement, because 8,500 delegates of the National Education Association voted against standardized testing; then suggested that a form of testing can be "collections of student work in each subject" (Associated Press 1992, Section 2, 8).

This show of consensus points to the probability that stress may be replaced by success for both pupils and teachers, as they develop the humanistic activities that are inherent in the definition of the portfolio evaluation process.

III. INTEGRATION

Be not afraid of growing slowly, be afraid of standing still.
Chinese Proverb.

Summary

I have participated in schools that use tests and grades to label children. Once the individual testing is completed, all like-labeled children are assembled in a classroom, and assigned a knowledgeable, dedicated teacher, curriculum in hand, ready to bring these pupils up to the next grade level.

At the end of the school year, inspite of continuous teaching, testing, reteaching, and retesting, the students again have a wide range of achievement, from A to F, excellent to failing. Why? Because the normative curve says so. It is designed to say so. It has no other language. How frustrating this situation is for students, teachers, parents, administrators, and ultimately for the community !

Grading is counter-productive to learning because it does not reveal to the student what he has learned, nor what he needs to study or why to continue learning. Both test grades and report cards assign letter grades. The terms A student, B student, C student. D student, etc. label the person. As a consequence most recipients of grades C and below, see themselves as failures.

The resulting self-image discourages them, so they give up not only in the classroom, but also from lifetime learning which is an exciting and necessary adjunct to being a participant in our democratic form of government.

A more humane and facilitating alternative is the student portfolio. All students participate and partner with their teacher to plan the relevant work that goes into their portfolios. Self-evaluation and the stating of personal goals, involve pupils so that they experience hopeful, conative power to continue learning with relevance and responsibility.

Combine this with the use of more current criterion-based interviews. Not to label children but to verify growth and diagnostic feedback to the student and the teacher. Now the process offers intellectual growth for student, and the classroom teacher. Especially, when the primary purpose of schooling is not to pass continuous tests of progressive facts that are of use, only to pass more tests of more minutia.

Portfolios organize and display for students their learning more effectively than normative grades. Benjamin S. Bloom substantiates this concept, "Our general understanding of learning theory would seem to indicate that knowledge which is organized and related is better learned and retained than knowledge which is specific and isolated (1984, 35)."

INTEGRATIVE CONCLUSION

As a former teacher, school psychologist, and coordinator of pupil services, the personal and professional effect of this paper, "Grades Versus Portfolios" prompts

me to evaluate the functional use of three philosophies in the classroom, behaviorism, humanism, and pragmatism.

I now perceive, that facets of behaviorism and pragmatism can serve functionally in the interest of a humanistic mode of operation, both in teaching and for the school psychologist's services for students, educators, and parents. I became more interested in this viewpoint, as I wrote the "Peer Interaction Study" (Muni,1993).

Because of a debilitating illness, I was not able to continue and summarize the studies from the proposal in 1969 through 1970-73. As a result, I requested early retirement in the spring of 1973. Several years later, thanks to modern medicine, I resumed good health.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Now, my understanding of "Grades Versus Portfolios" enhances my personal and professional effectiveness, because I perceive the interrelationship of the humanistic concepts of "psychology of hope" (Stotland 1969, 17), and the dialectic approach, where the teacher is a facilitator of pupil participation as students learn to question and discuss with their peers in a classroom where mutual trust and caring nurtures the self-image of both student and teacher.

The dissertation, Peer Interaction Study: Introduction to Learner-Centered Site-Based Management in Elementary Schools used a action research model which involved

classrooms with children who had peer concerns (Muni-1993). Participating teachers and school psychologist cooperated to implement a design with the objective of measuring the improvement of classroom peer-relations, concomitant with cognitive growth for the child with educationally disabling peer concerns.

During the process, from my observations, the climate of the classrooms was humanized for students and teacher. In addition, a parent effectiveness course, sponsored by the P.T.A. and the coordinator of pupil services, fostered parental support.

The basis for the philosophical authenticity of the mentioned study is defined succinctly by Combs:

We now understand that an individual's self-concept determines his or her behavior in almost everything that person does. It also affects intelligence, for people who believe they are able, will try, while those who believe they are unable will not. The self-concept, however is learned from the feedback we get from people who surround us (Coombs 1976).

The Peer-Group-O-Scope-Interview(Muni, 1993, 96-98) pre-test and post test was designed to honor and expand every student's choices of friends. That information was useful in regular learning activities and procedures to practice essential skills. These essential skills, not only

have immediate relevance, but the pupils soon realized that their class club procedures, interests in current events, and cooperative attitudes are necessary adult skills for optimal participation in our democratic society. On the subject of democracy, Allport reports:

Both (John Dewey and Kurt Lewin) agree that democracy must be learned anew each generation, and that it is a far more difficult structure to attain and to maintain than an autocracy. . . .Without knowledge of, and obedience to, the laws of human nature in group settings, democracy cannot succeed. (Allport, 1948, ii).

Most classic child studies invariably segregate the pupil from the classroom and culminate in labeling the child for instructional logistic reasons. These procedures, in my opinion, are proving to be counterproductive, considering all the frustrated, dropout students and dropout teachers and dropout parents (Kronich, and Hargis 1990) (Farber 1991).

Some psychologists are so involved in the individual's mental and emotional characteristics that they neglect to inquire how the group to which a child belongs (in this case the classroom) affects student perceptions and behavior (Allport 1934, vii) (Coombs 1976,7).

Classmates influence on the self-image of the child with peer concerns was the target in the "Peer Interaction Study" (Muni, 1993). The activities in those classrooms: a student club, vehicle for discussing current events and democratic procedures, pupil differences and values.

Of values, Piaget wrote, "It may happen not only that the child desires equality with his own kind, but that under some circumstances he claims to be on the same level with the adult himself (1965, 285)."

To continue the enumeration of self-image enhancement in the classroom of the aforementioned study, we add the interview " Peer Group-O-Scope"(Muni, 1993) for peer partnering, role playing; for learning and self-evaluation, small group task talk- maps and teacher partnering. Often a "child' s learning is strongly reinforced by adult attention," (Baldwin, 1968, 441), which could be the classroom teacher, parent, or and a mentor.

All of the above mentioned activities included in the dissertation "The Peer Group Study" (Muni, 1993) qualify it as highly compatible with the philosophy inherent in the definition of portfolio (Dowling, 1976, 89-92).

Current developments in collaboration research indicate that a statement of educational philosophy underlies each project. Ojay clearly defines that philosophy, . . . "As a viable method for conducting educational research which contributes knowledge in the field, change in school policy, and improved practice (1989, 2)."

Quite promising, especially when you are as definite about the product as Mitchell: "American education began with a vision which we should not allow to tarnish. The mandate of the U.S. school is to make a working, voting citizen of every child (1992, 193)."

If the goal of American educators is to generate a literate, "working, voting citizen" who can function in one or more segments of our society; whether in the arts, education, enterprise, government, health, industry, politics, services, science and technology; then we are all workers, even students and classroom teachers who with portfolios as practical humanistic procedures work to develop a potentially powerful micro-social group dedicated to democratic, ethical, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor education.

There is the possibility that in the process we will enhance the probability of the same achievements in our macro-social systems, namely: the Technological and Ecological Environment, the Commercial and Industrial Economy, the Political and Civil Establishment, and the Cultural and Educational Community.

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**About The Author
Curriculum Vitae**

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Education

Western Reserve University, B.S. and M.A.
John Carroll University, Certification as School Psychologist.
Kent State University: Post Graduate Courses:
Co-ordinator of Pupil Services.
Pacific Western University: PhD in Education

Honors:

Master Teacher Emma Jennings Award.
Mc Henry County College, IL: Optics Curriculum Advisor

Publication Credits

American Childhood	Plays, Inc.
Story Trails	Storytime
Sentinel	The Instructor
Story Trails	Teens Young Folks
Sentinel	The Instructor
Progressive Farmer	Bunting's Publication
Evangel Assembly Press	Children's Playmate
Grade Teacher	Household
Highlights for Children	Catholic Jr.Messenger
Child Life	Children's Activities
Calling All Girls	Friends

Professional Organizations

American Board of Opticianry
Association for Humanistic Psychology
Illinois Society of Opticianry
Lake County Business Industry Education Consortium
National Society for the Study of Education
Ohio Teacher's Association

Employment

Cleveland Public Elementary Schools, Ohio: Fourth Grade, Special Classes
Fairfax Elementary School: Mentally Talented
Orange Middle School, Pepper Pike Ohio: Seventh Grade, English & Social
Studies
Curriculum Writer(one summer): Ford Foundation
Full time Psychologist & Coordinator of Pupil Services:Beachwood
Schools, Beachwood, Ohio:
Manager: Optical Images, Inc., Libertyville, IL.
Mc Henry County College, IL. Curriculum Advisor
For Deposit at UMI: Peer Interaction Study: Introduction to
Learner-Centered Site-Management
in Elementary School

Postscript

August 2, 1992

Your perspective on the role of education in contemporary society, and its separation from pedagogical models that integrate the totality of a child's abilities, interests, capacities, and organic, human dimension makes a strong case for the need to unload the bankrupt "grades" paradigm and replace it with the more life-affirming "portfolio" paradigm. I only hope that the U.S. rethinks its failed system methods before we have lost too many of our precious children.

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Ann Muni, PhD

You have fulfilled all requirements for the earned Doctoral degree as of April 15, 1993; and to confirm your achievement, the University issues this official

STATEMENT OF COMPLETION

Further, upon recommendation of the Faculty of the

Cultural and Educational Community

and by virtue of the authority vested in the University by the California Superintendent of Public Instruction, we have conferred upon you the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

with a major in Education, with all the Rights, Privileges, and Honors appertaining thereto.

Working with you toward this goal has indeed been a pleasure.

Congratulations,

Kelyn Roberts, PhD
Dean of Faculty



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To whom it May Concern:

A copy of the evaluative note written by Dr. Simon, one of my advisors about my qualifying essay, "Grades Versus Portfolios." follows. What do you think about using it as the postscript to the manuscript? I apologize for its omission in the original submission (#TM 020448).

Sincerely,

Ann Muni Phd

August 2, 1992

Your perspective on the role of education in contemporary society, and its separation from pedagogical models that integrate the totality of a child's abilities, interests, capacities, and organic, human dimension makes a strong case for the need to unload the bankrupt "grades" paradigm and replace it with the more life-affirming "portfolio" paradigm. I only hope that the U.S. rethinks its failed system methods before we have lost too many of our precious children.

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Enclosure: Postscript